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SUBJECT: EMPLOYMENT ISSUE BIGGER THAN MINORITY ELECTIONS

REF: A) 06 Zagreb 1421

B) 06 Zagreb 1333

11. SUMMARY AND COMMENT: The Minority Council elections held June 17 in 20 counties, 57 cities and 68 municipalities brought out only eight percent of eligible voters and did little to change the public impression that ethnic minority councils are largely symbolic. These bodies, created to advance minority interests within local governments, have generally been unable to articulate a "clear vision" or reach agreement as to the precise role they are to perform, continuing to hamper the overall effectiveness of these largely perfunctory institutions.

12. However, key to the status of minority groups is the 2002 Constitutional Law on National Minorities (CLNM); a much more proactive tool for the future promotion of minority rights vis-a-vis employment opportunities in the public sector and political participation. While efforts to guarantee minority representation have had mixed results in the past, the GOC plans to designate 336 new positions for minorities in public services in 2007. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

ELECTIONS - PAST COUNCIL PROBLEMS LIKELY TO REPEAT  
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13. Following the first Minority Council Elections in 2003, Minority Councils across the country were plagued with numerous problems undercutting their effectiveness. With no obligation to fund them, many local governments have been accused of under-funding the councils, preventing them from acquiring office space, purchasing rudimentary office equipment, or even securing funds for basic operational capabilities. This, when coupled with council members' continued inability to clearly articulate the role of Minority Councils, led to the overall ineffectiveness of these institutions. In many cases, aside from the initial meeting, many Minority Councils rarely even bothered to meet over the past four years.

14. As relatively weak institutions with little or no mandate or vision, some Minority Councils were not even able to make a quorum as members lost enthusiasm in their new roles. Viewed in many quarters of Croatian society as unnecessary institutions, four years after the passage of the 2002 Constitutional Law on National Minorities, Minority Councils largely remain weak and ineffective agents for promoting minority rights.

15. The limited success of minority councils has largely been felt only in the area of cultural promotion; publishing of magazines, cultural fairs, and in reducing the overall climate of fear and intimidation minority members felt in previous years. A representative of one minority council in the Zadar area told PolOff, "Minority Councils have at least been successful in reducing the overall climate of ethnic tensions. In 2003 we couldn't even find candidates to run, however this time around we have had no shortage of people willing to be placed on the lists. At least that is some progress."

¶16. While representatives of 14 national minorities, or nearly 393,000 eligible voters were able to cast their ballots in the elections, voter turnout was poor, estimated to be as low as 8 percent.

#### MINORITY EMPLOYMENT - A RAY OF HOPE...

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¶17. The CLNM contains a provision to ensure proportional minority employment in the public sector in places where a minority constitutes at least 15 percent of the population, though four years after passage authorities have not fully implemented it. While employment of minorities has been a problem in the judiciary, employment in the state administration has been a particularly acute problem. The largest ethnic Serb NGO, Serb Democratic Forum, published a survey in June 2006 covering 23 municipalities in five regions where Serbs constituted a prewar majority and remained a significant part of the population. In the towns of Glina, Petrinja, Topusko, and Vojnic in the central area of the country, the report found that Serbs made up 22 percent of the population but held only 3 percent of public administration jobs. In Benkovac, Drnis, Knin, and Skradin in Dalmatia, Serbs made up 13 percent of the population but held only 4 percent of public sector jobs.

¶18. Government efforts to remedy the significant under-representation of minorities in state administration and judiciary to date have been limited. In May, for the first time ever the Central State Administration Office publicly presented changes to the plan for employment in public services for 2007. GOC officials pledged that of the 3,981 people to be employed in Ministries, State Offices and institutes, 336 will come from national minority groups.

¶19. Currently, excluding the Ministry of Interior, national minorities constitute approximately three percent of civil servants employed at the national level, contrasted with 7.5 per cent of the total population. At the county level, approximately six percent of

ZAGREB 00000612 002 OF 002

civil servants are national minorities. According to Minister of Interior Ivica Kirin, in the Ministry of Interior 24,976 individuals have been employed within the Police. Out of that number, 1,119 are members of national minorities, 857 police officers and 362 civil servants and employees. According to State Secretary for Administration Antun Palaric, the number of ethnic minorities employed in State Administration was increased by around 50 under the current administration. Media reports claim that 124 additional minority representatives are to be employed in the Justice Ministry, 50 in the Interior Ministry and 34 in the Finance Ministry. Additional minority employment is also planned in the Ministries of Culture and Economy, the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Development and the Ministry of Agriculture as well.

¶10. The GoC has responded to past complaints about understaffing of minorities in state administration with explanations of over-staffed bureaucracies, low attrition, and a lack of job openings. While these are all real challenges to addressing the minority employment issue, the GoC finally seems to be developing a plan to confront them.

BRADTKE